

## **The Great American Smokeout – November 18, 2004**

The **American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout** has helped to inform the public about dangers of tobacco use; the challenges of quitting and has set the stage for a cultural revolution in tobacco that has spanned the past quarter century. Because of such efforts there has been significant change and progress in the areas of research, policy and the environment.

The **Great American Smokeout** began in 1971 in the town of Randolph, Mass. Mr. Arthur P. Mullaney, a former guidance counselor at Randolph High School had an idea. "Kids used to come into my office after school, and one day we were talking about college," Mullaney said. "I said, 'you know, if I could have a nickel for every cigarette butt I see outside we'd have enough money to send all of you to college. I called it 'Smokeout', and we had a saying — 'light up a student's future, not a cigarette.' " What began as a small movement has grown into an annual event on the third Thursday in November, every year.

Of the approximately 47 million adult smokers in the United States, about half will die prematurely from smoking. Lung cancer is the leading cause of death for men and women. 169,500 new cases will be diagnosed in patients *this year*. More than 80 percent of lung cancers are thought to result from smoking.

In spite of the preceding statistics, progress is evident — 70 million Americans once smoked. The shift in public perception can be seen in the 1977 ban on smoking in public places in Berkeley, Calif.; the federal ban on smoking on interstate buses and domestic flights in 1990; and the 1999 Master Settlement Agreement requiring tobacco companies to pay \$206 billion to 45 states to cover Medicaid costs of treating smokers.

If you are interested in quitting smoking or wish to help others do so, there are several resources available on-line:

**<http://www.quit-smoking.net/great-american-smokeout.html>**

**[www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)**

**[www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco)**

**[www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/tobacco](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/tobacco)**

**[www.tobacco.org](http://www.tobacco.org)**

**[www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org)**

**[www.lungusa.org/tobacco](http://www.lungusa.org/tobacco)**